

SECTION II

Small Grants, Big Results

The Environmental Justice Small Grant Program at EPA Region 9



This small federal investment has yielded big results. Grants have gone to neighborhood cleanup projects as well as educational efforts to ensure that community residents understand public processes and environmental regulations or community-right-to know laws, as well as fully and effectively participating in the decisions that will affect their local environments. Supporting these grant projects has (1) helped the EPA make progress on the goals of Executive Order #12898; (2) resulted in the production of videos, workbooks, school curricula and other tangible products; and (3) has created partnerships that help low-income communities and communities of color build their capacity to address environmental justice issues.

Success Stories — models of action for communities

EPA Region 9 covers a large geographic area that includes the states of Arizona, California, Hawaii, and Nevada, the Pacific Islands and the Navajo Nation. The issues of concern to low-income communities and minority communities in this region are equally diverse, ranging from childhood lead poisoning, to air toxics, to the health impacts of exposure to pesticides, to facility siting issues. Below are a few projects funded through this program that stand out as successes. This is not a comprehensive list of all the successful projects funded through this program. Rather, our intent was to highlight a few innovative solutions to the variety of environmental justice problems communities face.

Environmental Justice Youth Leadership Project and Anti-tobacco Campaign, San Francisco League of Urban Gardeners. \$20,000

The San Francisco League of Urban Gardeners Environmental Justice Youth Leadership Program identified effective youth leaders and activists in San Francisco's Bayview Hunter's Point neighborhood. After learning about leadership and tobacco issues, the youth took charge and organized against tobacco advertising in their community, a universal environmental justice issue. The students introduced a resolution to city supervisors that could limit the power of tobacco companies on an international scale. The resolution seeks to apply these laws to corporations unilaterally — in every country of operation. After listening to the youths' presentation at a public hearing, San Francisco supervisors passed a version of the resolution on June 15, 1998. The next round of Environmental Justice Youth Leaders began training in September 1998 and will continue working on tobacco and other local environmental issues.

Radon and Indoor Air Pollution Project, National Council of Negro Women in the San Fernando Valley, California. \$16,500

The National Council of Negro Women (NC of NW) sponsored the Black History Month Festival at Los Angeles Mission College in the City of Sylmar. During the event, they presented a workshop on Indoor Air Quality and distributed hundreds of radon test kits to low-income and minority residents of the San Fernando Valley. This was one part of their overall strategy to motivate local community residents to test and mitigate radon and to

San Francisco League of Urban Gardeners



take preventative action against second hand smoke and carbon monoxide. Improving understanding of the cumulative impact of indoor air pollutants is essential to decreasing asthma rates among low income and minority people. The festival was well attended reaching 300 community residents and organizational representatives. As a result of this project, NC of NW set up similar Indoor Air Quality Information Centers and distributed educational information about reducing public health risks of radon and indoor air contamination at other events in the community later in the year.

Used Oil Recycling Project, Hualapai Tribe, Peach Springs, Arizona. \$20,000.

The Hualapai reservation is an isolated rural community located along the south rim of the Grand Canyon in Northern Arizona. The unemployment rate is close to 60% and a large percentage of people change their own oil. For years people on the reservation had to drive 55 miles away to Kingman, Arizona to dispose of their dirty used oil. Some people did this drive, but more likely the dirty oil ended up in the local landfill, on the soil, or in other inappropriate places. Today, residents of the Hualapai Reservation have a cleaner and more convenient option. The Hualapai Department of Public Services established a used oil pickup and drop-off service, a 'kwik pit' for customers, as well as a number of 55 gallon temporary storage drums located at sites throughout the reservation. This project was modeled after a similar project completed on the Hopi Reservation and funded through the environmental justice small grant program the previous year. In addition to serving as the model for this project, the staff of the Hopi Department of Natural Resources provided technical advise to the Hualapai Tribe, resulting in a more efficient and effective project.

Community Education and Planning Project, Pinoleville Band of Pomo Indians, Ukiah, California. \$20,000

The partnership between the Pinoleville Band of Pomo Indians and the Mendocino Environmental Center (MEC) brought together people with very different experiences who shared the land. The tribe and MEC co-sponsored two community workshops focusing on environmental impacts on the Reservation and Ackerman Creek. The two

groups established a joint planning committee to provide the community at large with information and the opportunity to meaningfully participate in the resolution of environmental injustices. As they explained, "many of us grew up witnessing the classic confrontational styles of the various interest groups in the region ... Our workshops fostered a collaborative process and built relationships between the various people interested in the resources and natural beauty of Ackerman Creek Watershed. Including community residents in the process brought passion to the planning process that a room full of professionals could not." One Pinoleville elder, for example, spoke of swimming in the creek with her mother and grandfather. For local people, "this kind of contribution cannot be quantified yet without it the planning process is a simple formula that does not always lead to success — passion, plus conviction leads to excitement, and that, ultimately, makes the process meaningful. The workshop injected people with enthusiasm, they found the spark to form the Ackerman Creek Watershed Committee which did not exist before."



After the victory in San Diego, hundreds of people marched and hung flowers and blue ribbons symbolizing clean air for Barrio Logan.

Environmental Health Coalition

The Toxic Free Barrio Logan Campaign, Environmental Health Coalition (EHC), San Diego, California. \$20,000.

The Environmental Health Coalition focused on involving residents of Barrio Logan and the surrounding communities in critical environmental issues. They introduced community members to concepts of environmental justice through bilingual community workshops and training of promotoras (or community-based educators). One very important issue in the community was the Port District's use of the toxic pesticide methyl bromide to fumigate imported fruit. This activity occurred at a facility just ¼ mile from an elementary school. Since this activity began in 1996 the residents and EHC took a proactive stance and initiated meetings with the Port to solve the problem. The organizers stepped up attention to this issue because of the growing concern in the community about the health and environmental effects of the fumigations. They organized a rally, attended local public meetings en masse and spoke during public comment periods. Prior to one significant meeting, a noon rally was held at the elementary school followed by a car caravan of about 30 cars en route to the Port District meeting. Over 200 community residents attended that meeting and all television and radio stations and

the major daily newspaper covered the event. Ultimately, the Port Commission adopted a Fumigation Use Policy prohibiting the importation of commodities requiring the use of methyl bromide. This is the first such policy to be enacted in the country.

Brownfields Environmental Justice Project, Urban Habitat Program, San Francisco, California. \$20,000

Urban Habitat's Brownfields Environmental Justice project worked to ensure that community activists in the Bay Area were, and continue to be, at the table to incorporate the principles of environmental justice and sustainability into the design and implementation of Brownfields policies and redevelopment projects. Nine meetings of the

Brownfields Working Group, which includes EPA and local agency representatives as well as community organizations and other brownfield stakeholders, resulted in the publication of *Building Upon Our Strengths: A Community Guide to Brownfields Redevelopment in the San Francisco Bay Area*. The working group and community guide serve as models for integrating environmental justice considerations into Brownfield Pilot projects nationwide.

Project Restore, Ramona Gardens Resident Advisory Council, Los Angeles, California. \$11,851

Local residents of an East Los Angeles low-income housing community worked to educate other residents about local environmental issues, resulting in the restoration of some of the most neglected open spaces in the neighborhood. Local residents completed a survey in which they identified the dirty and dying local yards and open space as a priority environmental concern. Local residents developed a restoration plan during monthly community meetings and organized to have planting materials donated from several nurseries. Residents distributed flyers in English and Spanish to encourage residents to participate in the restoration of the communal yards. Together, adults and youth planted seeds, flowers and trees in the most neglected yards. Photographs of before and after the restoration are displayed in every meeting to illustrate the improvement of the local environment as a result of local residents' involvement.

Diné Citizens Against Ruining Our Environment (Dine CARE). Winslow, Arizona. \$20,000

This all-Navajo community-based environmental organization worked with people in Dilkon, Teesto, and Seba Dalkai to recycle their trash and reduce the amount of solid waste they generate. Since many of the residents have little or no knowledge of the English language, Diné CARE developed a Navajo environmental vocabulary and used visual aids. A recycle drop-off center was established and two community members picked up and took the materials to a recycling center in Flagstaff, a 180-mile round-trip drive. The collection program started off slowly in November 1995, but by the end of the project year, the collection increased to 25 bags per month. Diné CARE sponsored an environmental conference at the



Ramona Gardens Residential Advisory Council

Project Restore, Ramona Gardens neighborhood cleanup

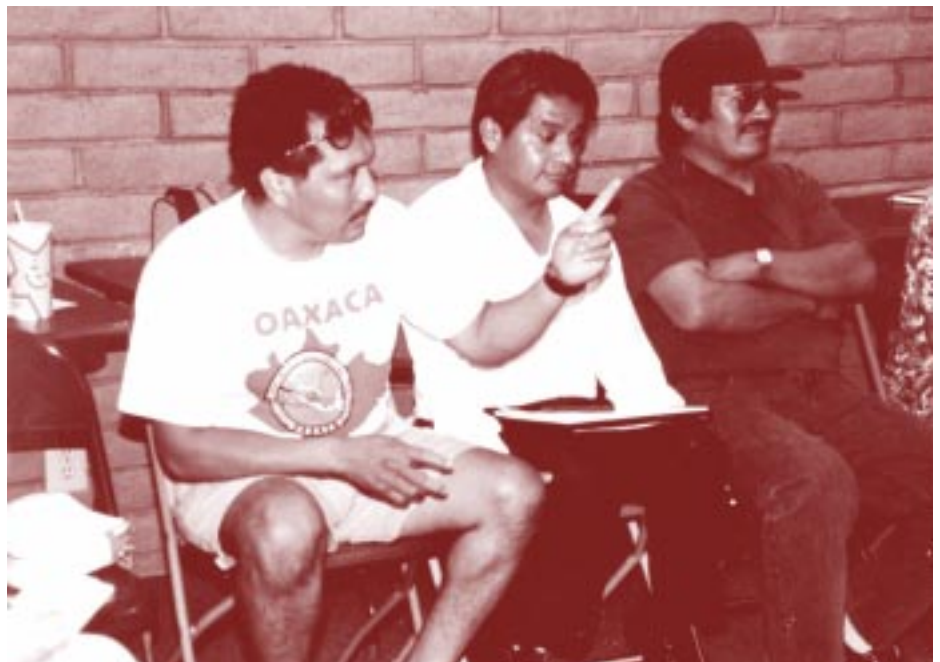
Dilkon Chapter and distributed a survey asking if people considered solid waste to be a problem in the Chapter. The environmental education drive increased awareness of the solid waste problem and led to a further increase in recycling in the community. In addition, through working with the Seba Dalkai School on recycling education, the *Navajo Nation Eco-Scouts* (an environmental education project for boys and girls) was started in January 1996.

Workbooks on Environmental Justice for Native Hawaiians, Native Hawaiian Advisory Council, Oahu, Hawaii. \$20,000

This project was designed to help Native Hawaiians participate in the legislative and administrative processes that result in environmental policies. The Native Hawaiian Advisory Council and students at the William S. Richardson School of Law prepared *E Alu Like Mai i ka Pono: A guidebook to Hawai'i's Legislative and Administrative Process* as a sequel to an earlier workbook *Kupa'a Ma Hope o ka 'Aina: Workbook on Environmental Justice for Native Hawaiians*. Five workshops were held on four islands to introduce Native Hawaiian communities to the workbook and to provide instruction for effective participation in the decision making process. For the Kupa'a grant, they worked with the Hawaiian Civic Clubs, the Hawaiian Homesteaders Association, Ilio'ulaokalana, an organization of kumu hula (hula teachers) statewide, and various individuals active in the Kanaka Maoli (Native Hawaiian) communities to organize the workshops themselves on each island. They held the workshops one week prior to public meetings by a specially-appointed government task force that was presenting a draft report on implementation of the Pash decision on Native Hawaiian gathering rights. Over 100 people attended the meetings around the islands and the attendees were well prepared to discuss the report. According to the grantee, as a result of the comments received at the public meetings, the task force revised their initial recommendations. While the grant is officially "over", these organizations continue to get requests for the workbooks and to participate in community-based workshops on environmental justice issues.

The Hazardous Materials Awareness & Preparedness Training Workbook, Oakland Fire Services Agency, Office of Emergency Services (in partnership with African American Development Association), Oakland, California. \$20,000

West Oakland is a community of homes, businesses and industries that serves as a major transportation center with railroads, a seaport, and an interstate freeway system. The ethnically diverse community is made up of 80% African-Americans, 8% Latinos, 7% Asians, and 5% Caucasians. 76% of the population lives below the poverty line. There are approximately 330 hazardous materials sites within the community — 29 of which are considered high hazard sites. The workbook and training program provides a practical approach to day-to-day living with environmental hazards plus practical information for eliminating or reducing these hazards. The workbook introduces residents to the basics of how to do a community risk assessment, encourages residents to reduce the potential of contamination and exposure to toxic materials, and most importantly, empowers



California Institute for Rural Studies



Introducing the grass roots environmental justice coalition to the community. BorderLinks.

residents to prepare for and respond to emergencies on a family and neighborhood level. Development of the workbook was a joint effort between the Office of Emergency Services and the African American Development Association, with technical support from Clearwater Revival Company.

West Oakland Defensible Space Assessment. African American Development Association in partnership with the City of Oakland's Office of Emergency Services, Oakland, California. \$19,000

AADA, in collaboration with the City of Oakland's Office of Emergency Services, identified where hazardous materials are stored or transported in this mixed land use area in West Oakland (see description above) and therefore where a need exists for community training and education. AADA mapped the location of 714 listed hazardous material businesses or toxic substance release sites to show their location relative to residential, commercial and industrial zoning, and schools, parks and medical districts. Community members were then trained in toxic and hazardous material recognition to ensure a safe and predictable response in the event of a chemical spill. The City of Oakland has also

been awarded a grant to expand its neighborhood training program, Citizens of Oakland Respond to Emergencies (CORE), to include a hazardous materials and community right-to-know component. The CORE project, in collaboration with the AADA, aims to foster greater understanding and a spirit of cooperation between government, local community-based organizations, environmental advocates and the local citizenry.

BorderLinks, Tucson, Arizona. \$20,000

For this project, women from Nogales, Arizona and Nogales, Sonora in Mexico participated in a series of workshops focusing on environmental justice through leadership development. One workshop introduced the women to the basics of environmental law in the U.S. and Mexico, the political structures of the two cities, and the basic elements of organizing people to participate in the decision making process. The project (which is still active) will finish with the women breaking into groups and choosing a small, identifiable and resolvable environmental problem in their community to work on. The final workshop will focus on developing plans for larger tangible projects such as recovering rainwater, recycling campaigns, water purification systems and building appropriate latrines in areas with no sewage.